

**Criminal Justice Collaborating Council
Programs and Alternatives Standing Committee
June 10, 2009**

Peter Schuler called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Committee Members Present:

Susan Andrews	Sara Carpenter	Mike DeMares
Dick Manke	Lisa McLean	Donna Martinez
Meg Schnabl	Peter Schuler (chair)	Jane Batha
Sally Tess	Diane Kelsner	D.J. Blum

Committee Members Absent:

Linda Van De Water/Donald Hassin	James Pearson	Harlow Beilefeldt
----------------------------------	---------------	-------------------

Also Present:

Pete Slesar	Dimitri Topitzes	Debbie Davis
-------------	------------------	--------------

Approval of Minutes from February 11, 2009 and May 13, 2009

The minutes of February 11 and May 13, 2009 were accepted.

Approval of Minutes from April 8, 2009

The minutes of April 8, 2009 were accepted with changes.

Review & Consider 2010 CJCC Fiscal and Programming Recommendations

Schuler said budget preparation is slightly behind schedule. The CJCC tax levy will increase \$13,500 for 2010 which assumes \$42K will be generated in ATC fees. Providing contract increases is a goal of the 2010 budget. The only program facing financial difficulty is the ABE program in the jail. The budget is \$27K short and outside funding sources are being sought. Workers from the ABE program have met with the County Executive to discuss budget options. The constant changes to the state budget make it difficult to tell how Waukesha County's HHS will fare in the end. Schuler will distribute a written summary of CJCC budget recommendations and a memo before the next meeting.

Presentation/Discussion on Dhamma Brothers Meditation Program for Inmates

The committee watched a short video about inmates at a high security penitentiary in Alabama that went through a Vipassana meditation course. Topitzes explained that Vipassana meditation courses, which are derived from eastern approaches to mental training in particular the figure of Buddha, have been held in North American correctional facilities since 1997 with measurable success in lower recidivism rates and improving inmate behaviors and coping skills. Vipassana is a non-sectarian technique of mental training and ethical conduct. This systematic process of self-observation leads to increased awareness, self-control and inner balance. As a result, Vipassana meditation can actually change how inmates make decisions, reduce recidivism, positively impact alcohol and other drug addictions and psycho-social metrics. Vipassana has been presented in ten-day courses at federal, state and county facilities by experienced, volunteer teachers and course assistants and is completely free of charge except for operational costs. The benefits of Vipassana are immediate, observable and significant, but require a serious commitment by both the inmate and the institution.

Topitzes said one facility in Wisconsin has shown interest in trying the program and several states have started the program. University of Wisconsin researchers are interested in studying the effects of the program.

Martinez asked if the program must be a ten-day isolated program? Davis said the introduction must be ten days. Martinez said in some programs, people are not there for ten days and may have court hearings and appointments. Topitzes said they like to provide the course to the segment of the population that has been sentenced and are doing time. Other programs offer meditation in smaller, more concentrated doses.

Manke asked if Topitzes could provide statistical data on the program. Topitzes said some inmates continue to participate in the program after the initial course. The positive results references inmates with reductions in AODA and recidivism as compared to a matched population.

Schnabl asked if the data is good because trustees and upper level inmates are selected for the program? Topitzes said those who take the course have selected themselves into the course. Those who do not select into the course, select into other options.

In response to a question, Topitzes indicated that groups generally consist of ten to 25 people but vary from facility to facility. The course has no parameters.

Schnabl asked how invasive are the guards? Topitzes said security guards are in the confines of the course itself. Accommodations can be made to insure security needs are taken care of. Teacher may sleep in different areas and participants do not return to general population until the program ends.

Martinez left at 9:26 am

Davis said participants must complete an assessment before they can participate. You need a stable mind to participate and not everyone is accepted. People on prescriptions are usually not allowed. Need to have a stable mind.

Manke said he would need constant reminders or a daily tune up. Davis said studies done three to six months after the intensive treatment show impact. Topitzes said we can modify our measures to the population we are serving. The biggest barrier is finding a facility that will implement the program. Davis said we can work with any population and is delighted to do so.

Batha and Blum left at 9:55 a.m.

Topitzes distributed business cards and asked committee members to contact him with questions. He has had great experiences professing this meditation and teaching its benefits to others.

Schnabl left at 10 am.

Next Meeting Dates:

- The next meeting date was tentatively set for July 8 at 8:30 a.m.
- Wednesday, September 9, 2009 at 8:30 am, HHS Boardroom

The meeting adjourned at 10:04 a.m.